

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS

(Section of the Library Association)

Vol. XXXIX

JANUARY—FEBRUARY, 1946

No. 1

HON. EDITOR: W. B. STEVENSON

Hornsey Public Libraries

Editorial and Announcements

TO all our readers and contributors we extend our best wishes for the New Year. Our especial thanks are due to those members in the Forces who have found time to write articles and letters; we wish them all a speedy return to their professional duties.

The index to the 1945 issue is in course of compilation, and will be sent out with the March-April issue to subscribers. Individual members and library authorities who wish to obtain copies of the Index should apply to Mrs. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, S.E.24, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. Applications should *not* be made to the Editor.

The Hon. Education Secretary informs us that all of the A.A.L. series is now out of print with the exception of Sayers' *The Library Committee*. It is hoped that the new edition of Phillips' *Primer of classification* will be ready early in 1946.

INAUGURAL MEETING

The first inaugural meeting of the Association of Assistant Librarians to be held since 1939 will take place at Chaucer House on Wednesday, 30th January, at 7.30 p.m. The speaker will be:

MR. COMPTON MACKENZIE

On "Sixty Years of Reading"

It is hoped that as many members as possible will attend, and a hearty invitation is extended to visitors.

The Library Assistant

A.A.L. Correspondence Courses

Correspondence courses in the sections mentioned below will be arranged to run from April to June of the following year, and from November to December of the following year.

The Courses, conducted under the auspices of the A.A.L. (Section of the L.A.) comprise ten monthly lessons, consisting of a prescribed selection of technical reading, hints and advice on study and practical work, and questions or subjects for essays upon which the tutor will write comments or corrections.

The subjects treated and the respective fees are as set out below :—

Entrance Examination.—The course covers the whole of the L.A. requirements for this examination. Fee, £2 0s. 0d.

Registration Examination.—Group (a) (i) Classification—Fee, £1 5s. 0d. ; (ii) Cataloguing—Fee, £1 5s. 0d. Group (b) (iii) and (iv) Bibliography and Assistance to Readers in the choice of books—Fee, £2 0s. 0d. Group (c) (v) Library Organization and Administration—Fee, £1 5s. 0d. ; (vi) History of English Literature—Fee, £1 5s. 0d.

Final Examination.—Part 1, Bibliography and Book Selection—Fee, £1 10s. 0d. Part 2, Library Organization and General Librarianship—Fee, £1 10s. 0d. Part 3, Library Routine and Administration : (a) Public Libraries—Fee, £1 10s. 0d. ; (b) University and College Libraries—Fee, £1 10s. 0d. Part 4, Literary Criticism and Appreciation : (a) Modern Literature—Fee, £1 10s. 0d. Part 5, Specialist Certificates : (c) Advanced Classification—Fee, £1 5s. 0d. ; Advanced Cataloguing—Fee, £1 5s. 0d. ; (d) Historical Bibliography—Fee, £1 10s. 0d.

Both full courses and short revision courses in Classification and Cataloguing, based on the old syllabus, are still available for those members who wish to complete their Intermediate Examination, having already passed one part by December, 1945. Fees for these courses remain at £1 6s. 6d. per subject.

Non-members of the Library Association are charged double fees.

Students wishing to enter for a course must obtain an application form and send it, together with the necessary fee, to Mrs. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24. Applications must reach the above before 20th March and 20th October for the April and November courses, respectively, and before 20th February and 20th August for the revision courses. After these dates no application will be considered.

For the benefit of those students who sat for one part of the Intermediate Examination in December, and will not know whether they are eligible to take the second part in 1946 until the results have been published, the A.A.L. will be arranging courses in Classification and Cataloguing, based on the old syllabus, as from March, 1946. These courses, which should not be confused with the short revision courses, will run from March until December, 1946, and the closing date for applications will be the 20th February, 1946.

Important.—Before entering for a course, students are particularly advised to make themselves familiar with the regulations governing the examination, as printed in the "Library Association Year Book." Any queries concerning the examinations or the syllabus should be sent direct to the Library Association, and not to the Association of Assistant Librarians.

The Library Assistant

Council Notes

THE Council met on 14th November, 1945, the President (Mr. J. T. Gillett) in the chair.

The Officers presented an interim report on Divisional Organization, and were instructed to proceed with a scheme to extend divisions and create new ones if necessary, so that all parts of the country should be covered.

The Press and Publications Committee reported that Phillips' *Primer of classification* was approaching completion, and it was left to the President and Editor to fix the price.

The Education Committee reported that the total number of entrants for correspondence courses was 445, an increase of over 100, mainly in the courses for the Final Examination.

The Treasurer submitted a provisional estimate of income and expenditure for 1946.

The following were appointed A.A.L. representatives on the Library Association Council and Committees :—

To the Council : The President, Mr. J. T. Gillett, F.L.A. ; The Hon. Secretary, Mr. E. Cave, F.L.A.

Education Committee : Mr. W. H. Phillips, F.L.A.

Membership Committee : Miss W. M. Heard, F.L.A.

Publications Committee : Miss C. Madden, F.L.A.

Some Notes on Press Relations

Harold Jolliffe

THE importance of establishing good relations between the library and the Press cannot be over-estimated. Adequate press reports are of as great a value, at least, as any of the domestic publicity issued in the normal way by the librarian.

Practically everyone to-day reads a newspaper, and local news in particular is read regularly by most people. Furthermore, and this is a fact which editors know full well, the average citizen takes a pride in seeing in print the activities of local institutions, especially if he happens to have some slight connection with the particular event reported. It is not easy, however, to obtain press publicity for the library's affairs, especially in these days of smaller newspapers and even smaller staffs, and it is advisable for the librarian to study the subject of press relations carefully.

Much depends on the area covered by the newspaper and served by the library. A large city or town will probably possess one or more daily newspapers, plus a variety of weekly organs. On the other hand a smaller town may be served only by one weekly newspaper. Study of the paper in question is important. An old-fashioned weekly will deal with local events at length. This is the type of journal which "splashes" births, marriages and deaths, and covers fully the activities of the local authority. It is generally fairly easy to persuade the editor to deal kindly with the library. Often there is a literary page, and "library jottings" and "recent additions" will readily find places in it.

The Library Assistant

The daily newspaper of the larger town is a much more difficult proposition. Here national news plays a large part, and local news is often treated in a sketchy fashion. A "library column" in such cases is unusual and lists of additions almost unknown. Often the newspaper serves a much wider area than the town in which it is published and it is obvious that many localities compete in their demands for space. It is here then that the librarian must tread most warily.

The first step in all cases is a careful analysis of the local press. Points which must be determined include the method of treatment of local news; whether the paper is old-fashioned in its presentation or whether it imitates the "tabloid" variety; what special features it possesses, i.e., "town topics," "round the town," literary page, "local news in brief," "women's page," etc. Again, it is important to note what type of news interests the paper. If it is published by one of the larger groups a definite policy is usually adopted on topical questions, and this may have a profound effect, for instance, on the report of a library lecture. In other words, the same advice should be taken which is given to all journalists—study the market beforehand.

Let us now consider the particular activities of public libraries which may be of interest to the newspaper world. In the small library again, the way is at least straightforward. The "library column" or the literary page will incorporate all such activities. In the case of the larger centre, it is convenient to divide up the work into the following: news items, reports of lectures, etc., and photographs. News items will embrace practically everything, but here, as in all such publicity, proper selection is needed. Appropriate items may include the opening of new libraries, reorganization, staff topics, important single additions to the stock, exhibitions, and a host of other material. Some of these may be covered by a note to the editor or just simply telephoned through, whilst others may best be served by an invitation to a reporter to visit the library. The opening of a new library or an exhibition, for instance, where something is actually to be seen, is obviously best covered by a reporter in person.

An important point with news items is to decide the particular part of the newspaper which is most appropriate. Thus a children's book exhibition is probably best noted on the women's page, whilst the acquisition of some valuable local book may possibly find its best location in "town topics." It is surprising what can be included in such columns if good relations between the press and the library are firmly established. I remember a few years ago a cat adopted the reference department of a well-known library. A day or so later, the writer of the "round the town" column of the local newspaper, in quest of items for the day's issue, seized upon this and duly reported it at length, emphasizing the fact that even a cat had the good sense to visit the library.

Press reports of lectures and other similar activities are rather more difficult to obtain. This is especially the case when the newspaper in question is a daily and when the lectures occur regularly at weekly or fortnightly intervals. If a report is made after each the value of such a sustained effort is great, but the obstacles to be faced are many. It is unlikely that a reporter will be assigned to cover the lectures (unless they are very important indeed), especially as in the case of branch libraries the venue is some distance out of town and the time of meeting in the evening. It becomes necessary then for the librarian to send in his own report, and if he is dealing with a daily paper it is not an easy matter to get it in time. The writing of a report obviously

The Library Assistant

entails staying behind after the lecture, and taking the copy by hand into the press office. Alternatively, notes may be taken during the lecture, copy may be written up next morning, and telephoned through to the newspaper before it goes to press.

This sounds very simple even if a trifle laborious, but in effect it bristles with difficulties. Again, careful study is needed of the paper's requirements, and an eye must be kept on the possible "placing" of the report. Style must be watched—a pedantic or scholarly report is hardly likely to be mistaken for journalist's copy. Wearisome statistics, often the standby of a lecturer, must be omitted unless of definite news value. Long historical dissertations should be avoided as the sub-editors will cut them savagely. The report should not be too long, but must be long enough to allow for the cutting by the aforementioned gentlemen. It is better, too, to give an actual report rather than a series of disconnected points. It is important here to note that the same report should not be given if there is more than one newspaper to contact. The library angle must not be stressed too much. Often a mere mention of the place of meeting in the discussion of the speaker's address is all that is needed. Praise for the library cannot be expected every time it is mentioned. Very important, too, is the topical angle. Two illustrations of this may be taken from our programmes of film-lectures in Leicester. In February of last year we dealt with the subject of coal-mining, and the speaker was the District House Coal Officer. During the week in which the event took place, coal was very scarce in Leicester and we were practising economy. The speaker took the opportunity of telling his overcoated audience some home-truths, and needless to say they made a brave showing in the press next day. On another occasion we had booked the Leicestershire film "Grassy shires," the first organization to do so in the city. A local man, writing home from his station in the Falkland Islands, said that he had seen the film there, and by some means or other this letter was quoted in one of the local papers. We contacted immediately the paper's film critic, pointing out that we were going to screen the film and that we were sending a warm invitation to the boy's parents to join us on that evening. As a result we gained some excellent publicity for this particular film-lecture.

Regarding photographs, little need be said. It is imperative, however, not to invite a photographer unless there is something definitely worth reproducing. Worth in this case, as in all cases connected with press relations, is from the standpoint of the newspaper. A point to bear in mind is that newspapers will not normally take photographs unless there are people in the scene, and local journals often prefer a large number of people, having an eye on circulation figures. Pictures including children are popular from an editor's point of view, children being such useful ambassadors and partisans. From the librarian's standpoint, pictures are exceptionally valuable, as even those individuals who merely scan a newspaper rarely miss an illustration. New buildings or departments, exhibitions and displays, story hours, drama circles, etc., are amongst the best subjects in library work from the photographic angle.

There is such a thing, of course, as bad publicity, and sometimes press reports, although not absolutely bad, are nevertheless poor in quality. Letters from angry borrowers to the editor are perhaps the worst form of publicity. If press relations are good, however, the editor will usually contact the librarian before printing so that any official comments or contradictions may be given at the same time. It is rare for newspapers to make deliberate attacks on libraries—it is much more common for the

The Library Assistant

librarian to suffer a poor press report. It is very disappointing, when time and trouble have been spent on writing good copy, to see it dismissed in a few garbled lines. It is all the more important to invoke the aid of the press only when something of definite news value is available, and to leave the hard-pressed reporters alone when news is non-existent. A long report on a dull lecturer may be a compliment to him, but he will not realize it, as the paper will refuse to print. Even the fact that advertisements have been paid for will not avail in such cases.

Following are some examples taken from the cuttings file at the Southfields Library, Leicester, and which illustrate the various types of press reports :—

Report on lecture by women's columnist, 1943.

"The twenty years' pact made by this country with Russia was referred to by Mrs. Eileen Bigland, the authoress and traveller, when she spoke at Southfields Library last night . . ."

These were the opening words of the report, some 120 lines in length. It should be noted that the library was mentioned only once, but this was natural in a straightforward report. Such prominence in a widely read column is of obvious value. The example shows the importance of contacting the right department of the newspaper.

News report of lecture, 1943.

"De Gaulle officer's view of controversy."

Large headline to a 70-line report. This paper possesses no "round the town" column, and the report was on the general news page. The library was mentioned only as the place of meeting, but the topical value of the subject and the link with the library are valuable.

'Town topics' report on lecture, 1943.

"Missed opportunity."

Headline of 30-line note on lecture which was poorly attended. The writer specially praised the talk and censured the public for missing it.

Report by film critic on opening of film-lecture programme, 1943.

"There is clearly going to be a stronger link in the future between local government and cultural activities . . . The influence of the public library as a cultural centre is not entirely founded on the availability of books. Lately there has been an increasing tendency to lead people in the direction of understanding what they read and encouraging them to experiment in different types of study. . . . The idea is to widen the interests of the people in the neighbourhood and coincide visual experience on the screen with available printed material."

Quotations from one of many excellent reports by this particular film critic. He is approached only on special occasions, i.e., when the programme commences, or when a particularly interesting film is shown. In the above, the most important point is that he links the book and the film in splendid fashion, and stresses the cultural side of the library's activities.

The Library Assistant

News report on lecture, 1944.

"At Southfields Library last night Mr. —, a repatriated prisoner, gave his experiences as a prisoner-of-war in Germany."

Example of a topical subject finding its way on to the main news page. The report ran to 75 lines plus large headlines and a photograph.

Reports by women's columnists of two newspapers on exhibition, 1944.

"The exhibition is a striking example of the value of co-operation between different educational agencies and the cultural possibilities of the public library."

"The neighbourhood idea, so much talked of recently, is undoubtedly developing on the Saffron Lane Estate, Leicester, where links are apparent in all the organizations. This is largely due to the awareness and keenness of the Southfields Library authorities."

Each report ran to approximately 75 lines and was accompanied by large-sized illustrations. In both cases special tribute is paid to the library, and a noteworthy feature is the effort made to link the library with outside activities.

Press relations must be viewed from the point of view of a long-term policy, and the librarian should not endeavour to rush into print with everything. If the editor becomes tired of being approached on matters which are of no importance to him, good relations will suffer. If reporters do visit the library, they should be treated with every courtesy, no matter how busy the librarian may be—the newspaperman, too, is a very hardworking individual and has little time to waste. It may be that in the future press matters will be handled differently, and the larger public libraries follow the examples of other concerns and have their own press officers or public relations officers. In any event, however, it is necessary for some senior member of the staff to possess at least an elementary knowledge of the way in which newspapers work. Libraries can be of service to the local newspaper and in return they will often gain much to further their own activities.



020.5

E. J. Willson

ASSISTANTS who intend to sit for the Library Association examinations are usually advised to read the professional periodicals to keep up to date with current developments. By doing so they can save themselves the mortification of referring to the unanimity which exists among librarians about the type of fiction to be provided or to the completely unrevised state of the Brown Classification; they will not be numbered among those who declare that minute classification has no critics nor will they learn text books by rote and spew them forth in mangled forms. Instead, they will be able to profit by the examiners' reports and quote the best modern practice. Mr. Headicar has written, "The person who is possessed of initiative, originality, and an inquiring spirit will make a habit of reading the technical library journals." The assistant who is merely curious can get a good deal of amusement from them too.

The Library Assistant

Before the war the *Record* provided a guide to current periodicals with a survey of the contents of its contemporaries and there was also the "Year's work in Librarianship" to recall the best of what had been written. At present the assistant has no way of knowing what he may miss except by conscientiously reading all the periodicals. Not even the L.A. Information Bureau can tell how many assistants do this, but it would be rash to assume that the copies of professional papers purchased by libraries are read by all the libraries' staffs or even that every recipient of the *Record* reads it. Are assistants who do not read professional magazines missing anything worth the time taken in reading them? We all agree about the importance of the periodical as an aid to study and research for our readers but do we follow our own advice? British library magazines are cheap and easy to obtain; members get the *Record* and *The Library Assistant* for one L.A. subscription and can have all three of the other general library periodicals for a few pence a week. Are they worth reading? Looking at them in turn it seems that each has something of value peculiar to itself to give its readers and that together they make up a balanced picture of what is going on in the library world.

The *Record* has a reputation for sobriety; more than ten years ago its editor—at that time Mr. Esdaile—admitted that assistants would "prefer a paper less solid and more provocative and vivacious" and this is probably still true. Perhaps the *Record* allows itself to be a little too heavily weighed down by the thought of its responsibilities as the official organ of the Library Association, which is not itself a purely professional body. Criticism of the *Record* is not always welcomed, but I would like to suggest that the relations between the Council and the members of the Association would be greatly improved if more space were given to reporting the business transacted by the Council. If members knew that the Council of the Association was giving full consideration to all the recommendations made to it there would be fewer hard feelings if the recommendations were rejected. The contents of the *Record* are varied and cover every branch of librarianship. There are bibliographies and books lists to talks and courses, lists of government publications—this last service of doubtful utility in view of the Stationery Office's own guides—and better than these, articles on all kinds of topics: New ones such as service libraries, salvage and the black market in books; old ones such as the respective merits of the dictionary and classified catalogues; practical ones such as the latest chemicals for book repairs, and idealistic ones such as librarianship as we would like it to be. Unfortunately, the very best feature of the *Record* has had to be discontinued. Mr. Woodbine's Reference Library Notes were a delight and made enthralling reading—no one in any of our professional journals managed as well as he to combine instruction, entertainment and what, for want of a better word, may be called inspiration. I hope that the *Record* will speedily find a worthy successor and that perhaps Mr. Woodbine may be persuaded to publish his notes well indexed. In addition, the *Record* prints notes of other sections, official information, news, reviews and correspondence.

The Library Assistant, although slightly older than the *Record*, is much more sprightly, as is to be expected of an assistant's journal. Students whose existence is acknowledged only twice a year in the *Record* receive ample space in it for their first flights and difficulties. The Student's Problems section of the *Assistant*, besides being invaluable for assistants taking examinations, also manages to be interesting for those who are not. The editor of the *Assistant* is the least intrusive of library magazine editors and he does

The Library Assistant

not write an editorial when he has nothing to say. The articles and reviews of new books which appear from time to time are less valuable, the books dealt with are so rarely other than the common matter of current reviews about which assistants who read the Literary Supplement or a newspaper are bound to know. The *Assistant* is not, and ought not to attempt to be, a "Literary" magazine. Even notes of some of the less well-known publications, although they would be of more value, would be out of place. The articles in the *Assistant* cover a wide range of topics and vary in quality from some of the best things ever published in a librarian's magazine to some of the worst. There was a time when it seemed no one might write for the *Assistant* without a book of quotations and puns at his elbow, but this phase seems to have passed. Some of the most valuable articles are practical—most assistants are eager for details of how things are done in other libraries. The *Assistant's* Diary of some years ago made fascinating reading for this reason. I wish the *Assistant* would do more in this direction.

The *Library World* is probably the most read of the independent library journals. Its best regular feature is "Letters on our Affairs" where, under pseudonyms, librarians disport themselves to the delight of all readers and the editor does not "hold himself responsible for their opinions." Often these opinions are outrageous and provoke storms in the correspondence columns for months afterwards, but they rarely fail to be stimulating. You may have Zenodotus attacking trash in children's libraries and suggesting eighteen subjects which need to be tackled or Phaedrus giving his opinion of the term "Chartered Librarian" and examining examiners, or Glaucon on book thefts and what's wrong with women librarians, or Callimachus complaining of the lack of news of large libraries and inadequate salaries. Each month there is something in the Letters about which to be angry, amused or thoughtful. The *Library World* also contains articles of general interest, annotated lists of new publications divided into professional books, new editions, general books, fiction and junior books; of these the most valuable are the sections dealing with new editions which indicate the extent of the revision, and the least, the reviews of fiction, much of which seems to be stuff which does not call for notice. Each issue contains editorial comments on library news and in addition there is personal news, correspondence and the reports of the London and Home Counties Branch Reference Group.

The *Librarian* lives up to its official description and is indeed "the independent journal" and, whether or not you agree with its editor on such topics as nationalization and the existence of ramps and threats to liberty, it makes interesting reading. The editor speaks a good deal more plainly than most and his targets vary from the lettering on the spines of books to the shortage of towels, from censorship to the inadequate salaries paid by certain named authorities. After the timid euphemisms commonly heard from some members of our profession it is a relief to find someone with opinions he is not ashamed to introduce in, and out of, season. The *Librarian* contains an annotated list of the "Best books of the month" classified by Dewey, detailed personal notes and correspondence. Recent articles have included a number of the literary associations of various districts of Britain, reflections on library work inspired by Baxter's "Intimate thoughts of a bookseller," "The working class child in the junior library," "Bookbinding," "Stalin's library ticket" and "Illiteracy in the Forces."

The *Library Review* is published quarterly, is the youngest of the library magazines and is the only one which deliberately sets out to be literary; it is "a magazine on

The Library Assistant

libraries and literature." A special feature of *The Library Review* is the presentation of opinions on current problems by means of symposia—as is obvious, the value of these varies according to the subject and the consideration given to it by contributors—the McColvin Report, School libraries, publishers' difficulties and "the man behind the librarian" are among topics which have been dealt with in this way. *The Library Review* also publishes an annotated list of books for adolescent readers and a list of new publications classified to three figures of Dewey. Much of the rest of its war-time space is taken up with notes on books, "Books and bookmen," notes on library matters and contributions from correspondents headed "Notes and news." In addition there are always one or two articles on matters of general interest to librarians and as the authors of these are very often not workers in libraries they provide a useful corrective to our own idea of our importance.

Looking at the current copies of these five library magazines it is impossible not to feel that even in their present attenuated form they serve us well and that time spent in reading them is well and profitably invested.



As Others See Us

Absentmindedness.—A minor bank executive whom we recently encountered in a Pullman car let us in on one of the deepest secrets of the trade. Of all a bank's customers, he told us, librarians as a class give the most trouble, and any sensible bank would rather deal with six forgers than one librarian. As you might imagine, every time a librarian gets absentminded she post-dates a cheque two weeks.—*The New Yorker*.

After Demob.—"We can roam, and go to the library, I've had my fill of excitement . . . Let's go back to the Public Library."—James T. Farrell : *My days of anger*."

Attitude.—"His activities would no doubt have seemed to Mrs. Verreker-le-Fleming not merely baffling but pointless. He paid a visit to a public library, for instance, and consulted a work of reference."—Anthony Berkeley : *The Avenging chance*.

Book Thefts.—"Good divel, forgive me now, and I'll never rob thy library more."—Marlowe : *Dr. Faustus*.

Bouquet.—"The Public Librarians of this country are nearly all enterprising and far-sighted men, not satisfied with second-best methods."—Bernard Newman : *One man's year*.

Cash—or Carry?—"Millions of readers read books without paying a penny directly to author or publisher. The readers of public and private libraries ought to pay a tax of a penny, twopence, or some sum like that every time they take out one of my books."—V. S. Pritchett.

Censorship.—"The damned prigs in libraries and bookshops daren't handle me because they pretend they are delicate-skinned and I am hot. May they fry in Hell."—D. H. Lawrence : *Letters*.

Concentration.—"Danny read more, eagerly, now and then taking notes, losing all sense of where he was : he didn't hear the occasional noises that disrupted the quiet of the library, books slammed, whispers, footsteps, giggles . . . He hadn't been aware

The Library Assistant

that the girls had taken seats opposite him. They whispered. One of them giggled. He looked up. They bent over their books. He read. Again whispers, and then a giggle. He couldn't concentrate . . . they seemed to think that a library was a social centre."—James T. Farrell : *My days of anger*.

Economy via Sublimation.—"Unlike more attractive men, he has never wasted his evenings with drink and cards and wild women. These hobbies cost money, while a ticket for the public library cost nothing."—Lister : *Softly, softly catchee monkey*.

Junior Staff.—"The rest of the library staff consisted of two girls who stood in a little pen at the barrier and dealt with the books borrowed, marking them and their tickets, both when they were taken from the library, and when they were returned to it. Theirs was an inferior status . . ."—Josephine Bell : *Death on the borough council*.

Municipal Pride.—"We had two newspapers and a civic auditorium and a Public Library one-third full of books."—William Saroyan : *Raisins*.

Relations with Public.—"At lunch-time one day went into the Holborn Reference Library and said to the young woman in charge : 'Could I see a copy of *The Tempest* for a minute please?' The pretty creature looked down her nose and said haughtily 'We don't take it.'"—Letter quoted in James Agate's *Ego* 7.

"A girl who worked in the library came by the table and shushed them."—James T. Farrell : *Ellen Rogers*.

Salaries.—"The only question was how he could support himself. But that was not the proper question to ask himself in a library. How would he support himself? This, properly speaking, was a cross reference. It was a problem to be handed over to someone else."—James T. Farrell : *Ellen Rogers*.

Sex.—"Ah, the library was a much finer sweetheart than a female—for a while at least."—James T. Farrell : *Ellen Rogers*.

Technique.—"Then I put in my word to tell them what the 'open access' system was and that, properly, it was the first thing to be settled before any plans were made ; and I said we ought to hear what were the Librarian's ideas ; and I asked why the Library Committee had not decided, first start off?"—H. B. Creswell : *Grig in retirement*.

Voices.—"A tired, librarian's voice."—*The New Yorker*.

(Compiled by J.F.W.B. and W.B.S.)



Divisional Notes and News

EAST MIDLAND.

THE Division held a meeting at the Council House, Nottingham, on 15th November by kind permission of the Lord Mayor. The proceedings commenced with a short business meeting, after which the Chairman (Miss J. M. Gladstone) introduced the visiting speaker, Mr. Alexander B. Toth, Publications Officer, attached to the U.S. Embassy.

The Library Assistant

Mr. Toth devoted the greater part of his talk to an account of the Library of Congress, where he had worked for some years prior to his coming to England. After giving a general description of the functions and purpose of the library, he enlarged on the processes through which a book passes from the time it enters the library until it finally reaches its place on the shelves. It was perhaps rather surprising to find that these processes are very similar to those carried out in the average British library—but naturally are considerably more detailed and on a far larger scale.

Several members had questions to ask Mr. Toth regarding the various aspects of American librarianship which they were studying for their professional examinations, and the differences between British and American library qualifications were the source of much comment.

A vote of thanks was passed to the speaker by Miss P. M. Harris of the Nottingham Public Library staff, and this was seconded by Mr. R. P. Donald. Thanks were also expressed to the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Nottingham for their permission to hold the meeting in the Council House.

Thirty-seven members attended the meeting.

NORTH-EASTERN DIVISION.

On 21st November and 29th November, two parties each of over thirty members were taken round the premises of the *Newcastle Journal & Evening Chronicle*. In a most interesting tour, they were shown the photographic department, the news reception rooms with telephone, teleprinters and Creed machines, the linotype composing machines, the stereotype machine, the cutting and folding machine which produces the finished article. The electrical control room from which all the machines are worked, and finally the packing and distribution departments were seen. It is hoped that the Division will resume its normal activities in the near future.

WESSEX DIVISION.

Next Meeting : 23rd January, 1946, at the Central Library, Southampton. Speaker : Mr. B. M. Headicar, F.L.A., Director, Inter-Allied Book Centre ; followed by Annual General Meeting.

The Wessex Division's celebration of the first meeting of the Western Section of the South Coast Division took the form of a joint meeting with the South-Eastern Division held at Portsmouth on Wednesday, 7th November. There was a satisfactory and representative attendance when Miss K. R. Bennett, Chairman of the Wessex Division, opened the proceedings. Letters congratulating the Wessex Division on attaining its majority were received from the President of the Library Association, Dr. Esdaile, the Hon. Secretary of the Library Association, Mr. L. R. McColvin, the President of the A.A.L., Mr. J. T. Gillett, and the Hon. Secretary of the A.A.L., Miss E. M. Exley.

Miss Bennett expressed pleasure at the presence of so many members of the S.-E. Division, and also members of the City of Portsmouth Libraries Committee, and the thanks of those present were extended to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Portsmouth Libraries Committee for so generously providing suitable accommodation, and offering tea to the visitors.

The Library Assistant

The Chairman of the Portsmouth Libraries Committee (Alderman F. Beddow, D.Sc., J.P.) was then asked to take the Chair for the meeting, and in his remarks Dr. Beddow spoke of his pleasure at being present, and referred to the shortage of books, which, he said, had not prevented libraries from becoming even more widely used than before the war, with the consequent result that librarians were now held in higher esteem.

Dr. Beddow then called on Mr. P. S. J. Welsford, the Secretary of the Library Association, to address the meeting on "The Library Association." Mr. Welsford opened his remarks by adding his congratulations to the Wessex Division, and proceeded to give some account of the work of the parent Association, especially during the war years. The various aspects of its work discussed included the provision of books for evacuated children, the recognition by various Government departments of the value of libraries, provision of books and libraries for H.M. Forces, the book recovery drives, the McColvin Report and the Library Association's "Proposals" and new Syllabus of training. In conclusion Mr. Welsford stated that the public library is the only safeguard to preserve the individual in these days of machinery and massed thinking, and stressed the value of the librarian. Mr. A. Ll. Carver (Portsmouth) thanked Mr. Welsford for his address, and the meeting adjourned for tea.

After tea Mr. Carver, in his capacity of Vice-President of the A.A.L., gave a stimulating talk on the work of that body, and referred briefly to the early history of the Association, and its traditional democratic and youthful outlook. Continuing, Mr. Carver paid tribute to the work done by women for the A.A.L. during the war years, and concluded by adding a series of amusing reminiscences of his association with the Wessex Division.

Miss Grace L. Dean (Worthing), the Hon. Secretary of the South-Eastern Division, then gave a paper on the "Early days of the A.A.L. in the south coast area," and traced the various developments since the original South Coast Division was formed in 1912. Before the meeting closed, Miss M. Dunne (Portsmouth) expressed members' appreciation to Mr. Carver and Miss Dean.



Current Books

TANCRED BORENIUS : *Later Italian painting*. EMILE CAMMAERTS : *Flemish painting*. J. B. MANSON : *Dutch painting*. (Discussions on art.) Central Institute of Art and Design and Avalon Press. 8s. each.

The three new volumes in this series are in every way equal to their predecessors. Dr. Borenius continues the story of Italian painting from Titian onward, surveying the years from 1475-1800. The plates are well chosen and give a good conspectus of the period. Professor Cammaerts writes on Flemish art with equal authority, and the plates are equally good, though perhaps we could have had a substitute for the often reproduced Rubens' "Judgment of Paris." Mr. Manson evaluates Dutch painting with judgment; he says "if they were never witty or seldom light hearted, they had solid worth." The series as a whole is valuable for the amateur in art, and each is a good guide to appreciation of its school. Librarians will applaud the solid board cases and the absence of eccentricities such as bleed-off plates.

The Library Assistant

The Faber Gallery. KENNETH CLARK: *Florentine paintings of the 15th century*. LAURENCE HAWARD: *Music in painting*. GEOFFREY KEYNES: *Blake*. R. H. WILENSKI: *Degas*. Faber. 6s. each.

The increased interest in art is obvious by the launching of a series such as this of which the above are the first of thirty projected volumes. Although 12 in. by 9½ in. is an awkward size for libraries, and stiff paper boards are a nuisance, many librarians will buy these books for their excellent coloured plates, many of them rarely seen even in monochrome. Probably the best of these four books, as far as reproduction is concerned, is the Degas, but the Blake follows it close (in the former we are spared, for once, the "Danseuse au foyer"). The Florentine paintings gleam with gold, but the intense blues and reds are not always up to expectation; this is especially noticeable in Gozzoli's "Rape of Helen." But the publishers must be congratulated on this new venture; it will enrich many small reference libraries and illustrations collections, and we look forward to the coming volumes with great expectation.

A. H. GARDNER. *Outline of English architecture*. Batsford. 12s. 6d.

One expects a Batsford book to be well illustrated, and that the text will be written with authority: these expectations are fulfilled by this account for the general reader, which is catholic enough to include both the crypt at Repton and the de la Warr pavilion. Styles and periods are dealt with briefly, yet in sufficient detail; text leads to illustration and illustration to text, making up a varied and thoroughly able book. Produced with all its publisher's attention to detail, this is an essential book for most libraries.

EDWARD J. DENT. *A Theatre for everybody: the story of the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells*. Boardman. 12s. 6d.

No one could be better qualified than Professor Dent to write this history of our National theatre: it is written with style, historical balance and without undue adulation. It is a story of triumph over adversity: lack of money, and consequent lack of actors, musicians, scenery—everything that means so much to a finished performance. That Vic-Wells has done so much in spite of difficulties, that it has succeeded in wartime in bringing drama and opera to towns that have never had them before; that it could do even more; all this Professor Dent describes with a wealth of anecdote and personal reminiscence. The plates are good, though some of them are of the postage stamp variety; the illustrations in the text, by Miss Kay Ambrose, are charming and effective.

IRIS MORLEY. *Soviet ballet*. Collins. 15s.

Miss Morley was a correspondent in the Soviet Union for some time, and she took every opportunity of seeing and studying the ballet, and of making personal contact with dancers and producers. The result is the first book we have had on the subject, and a revelation. Miss Morley proves that the old traditions are very much alive, that the "Russian dancers" are better than ever, and that for technique and production ballet in the U.S.S.R. is unsurpassed. Miss Morley writes pleasantly, critically and without gush, and in spite of the usual difficulties met by correspondents has produced a valuable record. A well-printed book, with some magnificent photographs.

The Library Assistant

Penguins. W. ERIC JACKSON: *Local government in England and Wales.*
MONTGOMERY BELGION: *Reading for profit.* 9d. each.

Here are two cheap and excellent books that should interest all librarians. Mr. Belgion was a prisoner of war from 1941-1943, and his book is the substance of a series of lectures on English literature he delivered to brother officers in the prison camps. His lectures on systematic reading are exceedingly well done and marked with a strongly individual, in fact controversial, point of view. Mr. Jackson is assistant clerk to the L.C.C. and this admirable 200-page compendium is up to date and full of facts. It is written for the plain man, and succeeds in its purpose; to interest and inform. As usual, however, the public libraries are scarcely mentioned, and the librarian does not appear as one of the chief officers.

Penguin Modern Painters. CLIVE BELL: *Victor Pasmore.* JOHN ROTHENSTEIN: *Edward Burra.* Penguin Books. 2s. 6d. each.

These two new volumes in a fine series are most welcome, for material on the younger painters is difficult to find except in the files of periodicals. Pasmore is an original and significant painter, and Mr. Bell's introduction a fine piece of exposition. Mr. Rothenstein describes the "rich though sinister poetry" of Burra's pictures; and the reader will agree that his paintings are extraordinary, grand, and at times horrifying. The plates, both coloured and monochrome, are excellent; the typography and paper good; these are most valuable monographs, and will be bought by every librarian who values his collection of books on art.



Correspondence

The Editor, *The Library Assistant.*

Sir,—

This contribution has been inspired by a plea from a Service friend to myself, "a mere Library Assistant," to start a "Brighter Libraries Society." As a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service, her experiences must be very similar to those of millions of Service people in search of "something to read," and, although she speaks as an individual and of individual libraries, I think her impressions may be of interest. In the many discussions concerning post-war plans the opinion of the "customer," the General Public, on the Public Library Service of Great Britain is very seldom heard. Bearing these discussions in mind, however, I shall send her a fairly hopeful reply, reassuring her that the "Brighter Libraries Society" undoubtedly exists in spirit in many parts of the profession, and that there is every reason to expect widespread improvements after the war.

She was first made aware of the deficiencies of the service before joining the Forces. Evacuated from London to Windsor, she finally succeeded in locating the Public Library of this Royal Borough, only to realize why the residents had been unable—or unwilling—to give her information on their local Library Service. If not actually "opening every third Tuesday, and only stocking *Hymns, ancient and modern* and *Mrs. Beeton*," it was at least sufficiently unsatisfactory for her to write:

The Library Assistant

"I have joined Smith's Library. Speaking to 'one as is in the profession,' I know I shall be understood when I say it is a boon and a blessing, especially after Windsor's Public Library."

As a Wren she became even more aware of what "a boon and a blessing" a library could be, and the effect of a good Library Service on the troops' morale can be gathered from the following extracts:

"I'm feeling less cut off from the world now. I still think that Cardiff is rather a dump, but I have at last discovered its Library—which is good . . . so I may postpone my suicide for a little longer!" Cardiff may have set rather a high standard, but, nevertheless, her complaints on being moved further into Wales were not, I think, unjustified:

"All the shops here (Milford Haven) are of the General Store variety. . . . So, the other day, I took the bus into the nearest town, Haverfordwest. Well, this is yet another argument in favour of a Brighter Britain after the war . . . it has a Boots', a church and a number of dull, dirty, nondescript shop windows. It also has a number of Service men and women standing dismally about on street-corners with nowhere to go. I, poor misguided creature, tried to find a Public Library. Pardon my mirth!!! I found a little room at the edge of the town, packed with large novels—very, very ancient—and dusty religious works. You could almost hear the death-watch beetles ticking!"

The sum total of her impressions have been condensed in her last letter from Belfast:

" . . . the Library is a big attraction, too. And, apropos of that very thing, why don't you start a Brighter Libraries Society after the (Jap) war? I'll give the whole of my Service gratuity towards the worthy cause when I'm demobbed. Most London Public Libraries are quite clean and decent-looking, and they keep their books up to date and well bound; but in all the peculiar places I've been in the last few months they either haven't got a Library, or else they *have* a Library but let it go into the last stages of decay. Belfast, for instance, is a city, with a university thrown in, and you would expect its Public Library to be fairly go-ahead. But no! they have a lot of books, but they are in any old order under the vague headings of 'Fiction' and 'Non-Fiction.' You look under Travel and find Botany. You look under Biography and find *The history of Irish railway stations*, or something. You look for any well-known book published within about the last two years and it isn't there at all! Maybe I'm being harsh, but, as I say with visible pride, you don't usually find the London Public Libraries behaving quite like that, and *they* have more excuse for having their books disorganized and unbound. These other places don't even keep their books looking respectable, and in Ireland, at any rate, there's not the excuse of shortage of staff! I will now descend gracefully from my soap-box and assure you that I am unspeakably grateful for Belfast's Library, which, after Milford's total lack of same, is a major blessing."

Yours faithfully,

(Miss) MAVIS E. OSWALD.